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NEW INDIA Political Pamphlets

No. 8

India's True Representatives

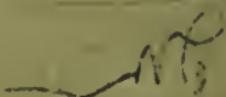
By

SIR PHEROZESHAH M. MEHTA, K.C.I.E.

Being a Speech delivered in 1895 in Bombay

How long ere thou take station?

How long ere thralls live free?



The Commonwealth Office
Adyar, Madras, India

1916

India's True Representatives

By SIR PHEROZESHAH M. MEHTA, K.C.I.E.

The following memorable speech was delivered by Sir P. M. Mehta in 1895 in Bombay. For his many and unique services, the citizens of Bombay and the Eighth Bombay Provincial Conference presented him with two Public Addresses, and in reply he made this speech which will be found not only interesting and useful by the Indian public of to-day but which has also its inspiration and message for the New India now rising.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,—I cannot but be deeply and sincerely grateful for the great honour which you have been pleased to do to me in presenting these addresses. However little he may have done to deserve it, however conscious he may be of his shortcomings, the recipient of such an honour cannot but be deeply touched and affected by so signal a mark of the generous indulgence, partiality and confidence of so many of his fellow countrymen in this Presidency, coming as it does on the top of no less ungrudging an appreciation extended to him unstintedly from other parts of the country. So utterly beyond my deserts as it is, I can still only tender to you my most heartfelt thanks for the warmth and cordiality of your addresses. In doing so, will you permit me,

gentlemen, to make a confession, and a somewhat ignominious one? People have been somewhat puzzled at the time that has elapsed since the adoption of the addresses before presenting them. Well, gentlemen, the fact is, that so embarrassing and dumb-foundering is it to be made to stand up to receive personal compliments and be expected to ring changes on that odious word ego in reply, especially when you are uneasily conscious all the time how far short you have fallen of the ideal held up to you, that when I was asked to prepare to receive these addresses publicly, my first impulse was to make a clean bolt of it, or failing that, to put off, I was going to say the evil, but I mean the uncomfortable day, indefinitely. But, gentlemen, I derived courage and confidence from an unexpected quarter. In a speech made at a recent memorable dinner, our late Governor—who, by the bye, has discovered since his retirement that the dissatisfaction with his administration was owing to his advocacy of the interests of the masses against those of the classes, which is news indeed out here to both the masses and classes—our late Governor spoke in a bantering tone of “that *triumvirate* which is known as the Bombay Presidency Association” and “that *individual* who is the Poona Sarvajanick Sabha”. No doubt His Lordship humorously meant to compare those unfortunate three persons to the three Tailors of Tooley Street. But at the same time His Lordship has unwittingly emphasised the fact that if you want to know the motives and principles of the men who form public bodies like the Bombay Presidency Association throughout India, you can safely assume them to be represented in the motives and principles of any three men among them; whether it was as in past days, my late friend Mr. Telang, whom we shall never cease to lament; or it was Mr. Budriddin Tyabji before his elevation to the Bench, which has been

hailed, if not more, certainly as enthusiastically by Hindus and Parsis as by his own co-religionists, or whether it is my life-long veteran fellow-worker, Mr. Dinsha Wacha, and myself, or whether it is the father and founder of the Sarvajanick Sabha, whose great talents and varied accomplishments are devoted to the service of his country with an untiring zeal and unflagging perseverance which are equalled only by the simplicity of his heart and the nobility of his mind, I mean my friend Mr. M. G. Ranade.

In something like this spirit, gentlemen, I imagine that the addresses which you have been pleased to present to me to-day are presented to me, not so much in my specific personal capacity, not so much as eulogising my sole individual motives and principles of political action, but as setting forth the motives which actuate the conduct of educated men all throughout the country, the principles which guide and regulate their action, the credentials which they possess of their qualifications, and the constituents whom they can, if not scientifically and systematically, at any rate really and substantially represent. From this point of view, gentlemen, I receive your addresses with the most grateful acceptance as setting the seal of the public approbation and appreciation on motives which is now the fashion to malign, on principles which are ignored or misrepresented through prejudice and intolerance, on credentials which are denied, and on the actuality of constituents who are said to have no existence. The time you have chosen, gentlemen, for this vindication is most appropriate, for there has been recently a remarkable recrudescence of calumny, misrepresentation and resentment against all those natives who venture, however humbly, to take an active interest, according to the best of their lights, in the welfare of the progress

of their native country. They are held up to scorn as ignorant and dishonest critics, they are denounced as selfish, ambitious, and dangerous agitators, they are ridiculed as fussy and meddlesome busybodies, they are contemned as pretentious nobodies, they are gibeted as unscrupulous demagogues, by people high and low in Anglo-Indian circles in this country and in England. We are bound at all times to speak with respect of the high functionaries of the Crown; we can only deplore that so responsible a minister as the present Conservative Secretary of State for India, Lord George Hamilton, should have been so far misled as to speak of us in a letter recently written by him as "those who wish to destroy and revolutionise the organic institutions of their country". As if this was not enough, we have been only the other day reviled as croakers of evil, shouters of sedition, and revolution-mongers, by one of our own countrymen, who, though never a prophet in his own country, is, by some occult process of metamorphosis, made to look like and pose in England as if he were really a great man in Israel, a man who hob-nobbed with our Rajas and Maharajahs, was hand and glove with our merchant princes, was foremost among the kings of industrial development, was a philanthropic employer of labour, and who was at the same time the sympathetic friend and patron of the Zamindar and the ryot. We have never recognised except one Indian who had the right to make a representative claim for all India—and that man by universal acclaim is Dadabhai Naoroji, to whom prince and peasant joined to give more than a royal welcome on his way to Lahore, Christmas before last. The pretensions of Mr. Bhownuggree to depose Mr. Dadabhai in the hearts of his countrymen of all classes and degrees could only be received in India, as they actually were received, with amused shouts and roars of laughter.

In the days when Natives of India were rare in England, it sometimes happened that people utterly unknown and of no position were received and were able to pass themselves off in social circles for princes and rajas and nawabs, on the strength of a little tinsel, a gold-embroidered cap, a satin coat, or a little jewellery, such as even loafers in Indian Bazaars affect in Indian towns. The phenomenon is no longer possible in Society owing to the increased numbers of natives going to England; but it seems that there is still room for it in political circles.

A certain class of Anglo-Indians have decorated Mr. Bhownuggree with a little gold lace, and he is set up as a great political oracle of "credit and renown," and he has been made oracularly to denounce the educated classes as sowing discontent and sedition by their perpetual selfish and unscrupulous attacks against the English in India. Gentlemen, I for one recognise the singular competence of Mr. Bhownuggree to formulate such an indictment, for I have a very vivid recollection of an incident that took place some years ago. I was returning from Kathiawar where I had gone on some professional work, and a friend joined me at Wadhwan in the compartment in which I was travelling. We got out for dinner at the Refreshment Room at Ahmedabad station; on returning to our compartment we found an English gentleman installed in it with a huge and fierce-looking dog by his side. Both my friend and myself had very strong objections to travel in such company for a whole night, and finding on enquiry that the gentleman meant to keep the dog with him, we tried to persuade him to relegate his companion to the dog-box in accordance with railway regulations. On his refusal, I spoke to

the Station-master, which so irritated the dog's owner that very soon my friend and he came to high words and some not very choice language, and I had just time to rush between them to prevent them from proceedings to blows. As I took my friend aside and tried to pacify him, the English gentleman complained to the people gathered about how utterly unreasonable and provoking our conduct was in objecting to the company of his dog. "I never object to travelling even with natives in the same compartment," he said with the most aggrieved air in the world. You can scarcely conceive, gentlemen, the paroxysms of fury into which my excited friend was thrown at this comparative description of the status of dogs and natives, none the less stinging because made with the most perfect unconsciousness of its insolence. I thought it advisable to take him and myself to another compartment where I tried to moderate his somewhat violent tirades against the intolerable rudeness of Europeans towards natives of all classes from princes downwards, by telling him not to generalise over-much or to take individual cases too seriously. But he was not to be consoled; he scouted all attempts to explain away the insolence of the treatment of natives by Europeans as anything akin to the estrangement caused by the exclusive character of native social and religious ways. He called to mind many of the stories on this point related in that excellent article in the October number of *The Contemporary Review* from the pen of the Rev. Mr. Bonner, whose accurate statement of facts those who are acquainted with things below the surface can fully verify. My friend added many others with which natives are familiar, including that relating to the English Gymkhana in Bombay. I capped it with the doing regarding the Frere Hall in Mahabaleshwar, built largely by native

donations, but which has been substantially handed over to a European club which debars, by one of its rules, any native visitors being allowed even on the verandah of the club premises. Though feeling very sleepy I was regaled by my friend for half the night with croaking fears as to the permanence of British rule owing to this galling behaviour towards natives, of the same character as are now denounced in the mouths of educated natives. This friend of mine, the hero of this story, was, gentleman, no other than Mr. Bhownuggree, who has now recanted the errors of his old ways and is posing as a reformed character before Anglo-Indian audiences to denounce the folly and danger of allowing the educated classes to make perpetual attacks on and criticise Europeans in India, who, if they have faults, have them only as the sun has spots. The fact is, gentlemen, that these charges of being selfish agitators, ambitious demagogues, and unscrupulous critics, hurled against educated natives are the outcome of intolerant prejudice and selfish jealousy ; or are made by the people who have no acquaintance whatever with the inner workings of the life of intelligent and educated Indians, and who have never penetrated below the surface to find the real motives which actuate them in the part which they play in public life. Our faults are many, our imperfections numerous, our capacities and abilities neither great nor brilliant, our methods disjointed and spasmodic, but our motives are not what they are represented to be by a certain class of Anglo-Indians who have now caught Mr. Bhownuggree to echo their sentiments.

Speaking for this Presidency, to know them and to comprehend them, we must go back to the time when the sober and sagacious foresight of that great statesman and administrator, whose memory will

always be reverently enshrined in our hearts, laid down the foundations of a policy, so different from the fashionable cant which now finds favour of specious and short-sighted depreciation of the national value of the mission of higher education and which bore fruit in the establishment of schools and colleges, notably Elphinstone Institution in Bombay. I shall never be tired of repeating the story related of Mountstuart Elphinstone, in pregnant illustration of his educational policy, by General Briggs, who served under him at the time of the Maharatta War. "Finding in his tent," says that officer, "a pile of printed Maharathi books, I asked him what they were meant for." "To educate the natives," he replied, adding after a pause, that "it may be our high road back to Europe". "Then I wonder," said General Briggs "that you as Governor should set it on foot." To which he gravely replied, "we are bound under all circumstances to do our duty by them." Grand as the reply is in its noble simplicity, it is no less remarkable for the depth of the conviction permeating it that the permanence and stability of British rule was only possible under the policy which was summed up some years ago in Mr. Buxton's book on the *Ideas of the Day on Policy*, as the idea that England should govern India for the benefit of its own people. From the educational institutions established under the glowing inspiration of so noble a genius as that of Mountstuart Elphinstone issued a band of noble youths thoroughly imbued with the sentiment that the education which they had received was given to them, not only to promote their own worldly advancement, but to devote it at the same time to the grateful performance of what that education taught them was the sacred duty of helping, in however humble a way, in making the foreign rule of the country in

whose hands the destinies of their mother-country had been placed by the inscrutable dispensation of Providence, a blessing to them both instead of a curse. The spirit and influence of these young men, penetrating in a hundred directions, have left an abiding mark in the aims, thoughts and aspirations of the people of this Presidency who will always cherish with pride and affection the names of Nowrozjee Furdoonji, Dadabhai Naoroji, Sorabji Bengali, Viswanath Mandlik and many others, the first-fruits of growth of the Elphinstone Institution. Though the first bloom and freshness of the enthusiasm has waned, the spirit which they breathed into the hearts and minds of succeeding generations of students has never been extinguished, and the same impulse and the same sense of duty are still, in the main, the guiding motives of the part which our educated men take in public affairs, notwithstanding numerous temptations to sink into apathy and indifference, notwithstanding sore inducements to desert the cause, notwithstanding sneers and slanders, discouragements and disappointments of every sort. Gentlemen, we may not be perfect in our parts, indeed we are not by a long way, but on the other hand our motives are neither unworthy nor unholy.

Impelled by these motives, what are, however, the general principles which regulate our public action? We are perpetually told that our claims, criticisms and aspirations are mischievously directed towards creating undeserved discontent with our English rulers who, if left to themselves, could be entirely trusted to govern the country wisely and well. It is said that in a country whose conservatism is so deep-rooted and intense as in India, it is absurd to seek to adopt the radical notions and methods of the western world. There is no greater misconception of the

real problem than what underlies this criticism. There would probably by some force in it, if Indian conservatism was allowed to work out its own destiny. But in the conservatism of the country, the living force of a new and totally different civilisation has established itself in all the vigour of its unceasing activity, and it is idle to talk of letting the aboriginal conservatism alone. The ancient conservatism is permeated already by the exigencies of a foreign rule of a radically different type, and the problem is how to reconcile them to a harmonious evolution. It is the inherent conditions of this complicated problem that absolutely create the need of a vigilant activity on the part of educated and intelligent natives. There is no word which is so misused and maltreated and which is more made the vehicle of the fallacy of the middle term than conservatism, when it is used to preach inactivity on our part. Because India is conservative, is there no need on our part to agitate for the reduction, for example, of the salt tax in the interest of the masses, for the enforcement of a policy of economy, for the lightening of the burden on the land, for securing a more sympathetic and less insolent treatment of natives by Europeans, for securing juster verdicts from European juries in cases of offences against natives? It is grossly misleading to suppose that what we aim at is to supersede Englishmen altogether, or, as it is sometimes put, to take the administration of the country into our own hands, leaving them the solitary task of supporting us with English bayonets. On the contrary, no one is more ready than ourselves to acknowledge the singular capacity of the British Nation over all other civilised peoples on the surface of the earth for governing a continent like that of India. In many respects, even the faults and vices of their character and temperament eminently adapt

them to the difficult and delicate work. But it would be idle to gainsay that the necessary conditions and limitations that must be set a foreign rule of so complex and unprecedented a character inevitably involve risks and perils and pitfalls, in avoiding and providing against which, the watchful criticism and close co-operation of the educated classes cannot but be most useful and helpful. It is most true and we acknowledge with unaffected gratitude that, at least since 1858 when the Government passed to the Crown from the hands of a trading and commercial company, the sober and sturdy political genius of the British people led them to recognise and proclaim that a just and righteous policy was alone calculated to secure the stability and permanence of the Empire, and to render the possession of India a source of strength and profit. But a policy of this character is not established as soon as it is proclaimed. There is always a struggle to relapse into the old ways of temptation. When Moses was called up into the mountain, even the favoured people lost no time in falling off from the Lord, and, relapsing into the abominations of the Egyptians, betook themselves to the seductive worship of molten idols and golden calves. As among the stiff-necked people of Israel, so among the English in India, there is still a large class who hanker after the fleshpots of Egypt and the worship of golden calves, and who strenuously maintain, with all the bigotry of narrow selfishness and uncultured short-sightedness that, as Mr. Bright once put it for them, having won India by breaking all the Ten Commandments, it was too late now to think of maintaining it on the principles of the Sermon on the Mount.

The danger, not of an open reversal, but of stealthy, insidious and indirect evasion of the policy inaugurated

in 1858 is always imminent, and one of the principles of our political creed is to be always on the watch to expose and defeat all attempts and devices to leave the service of the true God and return to the worship of false and corrupt idols. This attitude is unfortunately liable to be misconstrued and misrepresented as seditious hostility to all English rule, when it is really aimed only against those among them who are always preaching and practising a relapse into the old idolatry. It is often reviled as hatred and enmity to English rule itself, when it is really an appeal to raise its nobler from its grosser part. Then, gentlemen, there is a duty imposed upon us in consequence of the bureaucratic constitution of the administration which must be largely foreign in the very nature of things. It is in the very essence of a bureaucratic régime to demoralise, unless its healthy condition is constantly promoted by watchful scrutiny and vigorous criticism. The danger is infinitely enhanced in the case of a body like the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy, foreign, secret and irresponsible. So competent and qualified a judge, but one by no means unfavourable to or prejudiced against his English hosts who chaperoned his visit to India, as Sir C. Dilke, gave it as his deliberate opinion that "it was neither safe nor expedient to carry on the administration of the country at the hands of a secret and irresponsible bureaucracy". This conclusion involves no disparagement of the personal merits of the individual officers, though it is a curious fact that on his visit to India, the late Lord Randolph Churchill did not form a high estimate of the capacity and attainments of Anglo-Indian officials. He is reported to have said that though there were some good men among them, the average was very mediocre. But even if mediocre there can be no question but that English officers must possess some share of the

great qualities of the English race. The danger and the mischief lie, in the first place, in the one-sidedness and secrecy of the system, and secondly in the circumstances that English officialdom is not in touch with the people. I know that the latter statement of fact is vehemently and passionately denied, so passionately indeed that one is tempted to suspect that my lady protests too much. In vindicating at the Byculla Club dinner his policy of relying upon and consulting District officers only, seeing with their eyes and hearing with their ears, Lord Harris strenuously urged that he was justified in doing so because these officers were in complete touch with all classes, especially the agricultural masses. I have no doubt his Lordship was sincere in his conviction, like many others who echo the same sentiment from superficial observation, and without having a close and intimate personal insight into the real state of things. The claim is certainly a very plausible one, and strikes people unacquainted personally with the inner and deeper aspects of district life with great force. For close upon eight months of the year, district officers camp in the district, and visit place after place, and village after village of one or more of the talukas, doing revenue and magisterial work which must necessarily bring them into contact with large numbers of people; and even shooting and sporting interludes must go some way in the same direction. And yet it is an unquestionable fact that this contact, so close in some respects, never ripens into real insight and true knowledge, and does not develop the power of intuitive comprehension.

It has often been a matter of great surprise to me, as I believe it has been to many others, to find in unexpected casual ways how even the most experienced

and sympathetic European officers incidentally betray the most startling inability to enter into and comprehend the simplest facts of native life and native thought. The reason lies in what may be termed the "aloofness" of the English character and temperament. The district officer does his work, but outside and beyond that he stands utterly aloof from the people. His interest and amusements are jealously confined within the narrow circle of his own people, and he never seeks an opportunity, as he has neither the inclination, to enter really into the life of the people around him in the hundred ways in which it can be done even between people of different social and religious creeds. Hindus and Muhammadans are separated by habits and religions radically diverse; they could not intermarry nor break bread with each other. Yet even in the proudest and most bigoted days of Muhammadan rule, there was close and intimate communion and mutual knowledge between them. Fitful attempts are made by conscientious Englishmen to show interest and sympathy, but as a general rule, the English officer stands in a proud and sometimes contemptuous insolence which prevents him from ever acquiring a real hold over the facts of native life. At the most, he is sometimes an amused looker-on, or a philosophical spectator. This aloofness and isolation unfortunately intensifies another disqualification in the same direction. Englishmen are not easy linguists at any time, but in India they never acquire anything distantly approaching to a living knowledge of any of the different languages of the people. In the Bombay Presidency, there are not half a dozen men who have a good colloquial knowledge of any of the vernaculars, or who can carry on a decent conversation on general subjects with an ordinary native. They never acquire the lights and shades which are the current coin of the

intercommunion of native life and without a knowledge of which it is impossible to dive into the heart and mind of the people. In pointing out the hollowness of the assertion that District Officers are in touch with the people, I am not enunciating a grievance or exposing a fault ; it may be that the aloofness which causes it has its own uses and advantages in other directions ; I am simply stating a fact. But it is a fact which it is of great importance to recognise. It places these officers in the hands of the people around them who may, or may not, be worthy of confidence in the way of knowledge, capacity or interest, and deprives their views, opinions and conclusions of the authority due to information at first hand. But unfortunate as this circumstance is in itself, it is fraught with immeasurable possibilities of injustice, oppression, and mischief when taken in connection with the secrecy with which the Administration is chiefly carried on. It is a cardinal point of administrative etiquette never to disclose what the district officer may have reported about particular men or measures ; you cannot make even a shy at an indirect guess from the reasons of Government for its final decision, for Government now direct that the bare decision, without the reasons, should alone be communicated to the parties concerned. Gentlemen, it is this state of things which makes the most unceasing, the most searching, and I will add the most uncompromising criticisms of the acts of district officers a duty and necessity, if the administration is to be saved from increasing demoralisation. I know there are wise people who say that it is not to criticism that objection is taken, but only to hasty, violent, ill-informed, and unscrupulous animadversion. Gentleman, it is a remarkable fact that each side is generally convinced that the criticism of the other is irrelevant, unjust and dishonest.

But leaving that alone, if our criticism is very often necessarily ill-informed, it is not we who are altogether to blame, but the secrecy in which the administration is enveloped. I make bold to say that under such a system even ill-informed and uncompromising criticism has its uses, for, if it sometimes does a temporary injustice, the fear of it also serves as a check and a warning against many an act of arbitrary and oppressive authority. It is the only antidote of any real efficacy we possess at present against the inevitable evils of a secret and irresponsible bureaucracy. In the course of one of the speeches distinguished by a genial and sympathetic tact which seems to win for his Lordship all hearts wherever he goes, Lord Sandhurst has gently advised us not to make sweeping charges against officers of knowledge and experience. It is impossible not to receive with the greatest respect advice given in so frank and sympathetic a manner as distinguished his Lordship. But we would pray his Excellency also to remember the relative position of the people and these officers under such a system of secret and one-sided bureaucratic administration as prevails in this country. We have no other means of judging of the motives of these officers except from their overt acts. Even in criminal jurisprudence, it is not always possible to give direct evidence of the motive by which a crime is actuated, and the law directs that an inference of the felonious or malicious intention may be justly and properly made from the acts of the accused persons. When we attribute motives to settlement officers, for example, it is from their acts and proceedings and their results and consequences that we draw our conclusions. It cannot be unbecoming, improper, or undesirable on our part to submit these conclusions to representatives of our Sovereign placed at the head of affairs on the rare occasions when they move in our midst, not for

immediate acceptance and remedy, but as the convictions firmly and universally entertained by large bodies of the people entrusted to their care, and therefore deserving of being treated in a sympathetic and considerate manner by kindly efforts at explanation and refutation, and where that was not possible, by promises of enquiry and redress. There is a time for argumentative memorials; and there is a time for the formal and public submission of grievances in brief general terms. It would be a pity and a misfortune if it should come to be believed that the right, encouraged by the wisest even of despots, of allowing their subjects to present their complaints in person, was in any way intended to be curtailed. Those, however, who advocate the repression of free criticism and the gagging of our mouths urge that it is absolutely necessary to protect the officials from the constant attacks made against them, as to listen to complaints of their acts and to appeals against their authority is apt to bring on the dire misfortune of destroying their prestige. Gentlemen, I have come to dread nothing so much as the intrusion of this wonderful word *prestige* into Indian political discussion. It does duty for every act and measure that has no other argument to support it. Only the other day, so eminent a politician as the present leader of the House of Commons, Mr. Arthur Balfour, vindicated the retention of Chitral on the imperious score of prestige, forgetting that even the carefully edited Chitral Blue Book showed that the occupation was part of a deliberate scheme designed so far back as 1876. To me, it seems that the prestige both of the administration and its officers, instead of suffering, is likely to be increased under a freer system because in the first place the work would be more carefully and impartially done,

just as judicial work is done more cautiously and carefully under a system of appeal, and secondly because there would be a diminution of the possibilities of undeserved obloquy and dissatisfaction arising from ignorance and misunderstanding which a little publicity and explanation would easily remove.

But, gentlemen, when we charge the district officers with not being in touch with the people, they try to turn the tables against us by saying that the educated natives are still less so. Whatever their own qualifications, what are your credentials, they ask? They try to make out that in the first place, the microscopic minority is congregated only in the large towns and are utterly ignorant of the feelings and thoughts of the great bulk of the people. They gravely advance, besides, that education has so denationalised its recipients that they could no longer represent or understand real native life and sentiment. It is a curious illustration of the inconsistencies of the human mind under stress of a controversy that these same men are immensely fond of impressing upon us that our education is a mere superficial veneer, the slightest scratching of which reveals the old unregenerate barbarism in all its hideousness. Now what are the facts? Why, the large majority of educated natives are drawn from the small town and villages of the Presidency, and have grown up in contact with all varieties of the trading and agricultural classes. Then is the educated native estranged by his education from his kith and kin, and utterly denationalised? So far from that being the case, we have had recently to deplore a very suggestive spectacle of educated natives sympathising and going hand in hand in an extreme spirit of reaction and intolerance with the old orthodox opponents of all social reform. It is monstrous to allege that, however

educated, the native can throw off the material from which he has grown and developed. A native, educated or not, must in the nature of things intuitively understand native thought and feeling, where the most cultured European must lamentably fail. It is not a question of capacity or attainments, but in the one case it is a question of arduous effort, and the other it is simple nature. Gentlemen, we can understand our own countrymen more easily and more truly than the most accomplished and the most capable European.

But what are our credentials of positive knowledge? The other day a friend of mine told me that he was travelling with a high English officer—a Superintendent of Police, and the conversation turning up on the debate on the Police Bill in the Viceroy's Council, the officer was very severe upon my presumption in opposing it, as I could know nothing of things in the muffassal, whatever may be the extent of my ignorance regarding the City of Bombay. This, gentleman, is a typical charge in which Anglo-Indian officials are fond of indulging. Though by no means a very favourable specimen, I am willing to submit to an examination on that point, not of ability, but of knowledge and experience of the people. During a practice of a quarter of a century, I have gone on professional business times without number. I have traversed in this way Guzarat and Kathiawar, Rajaputana and Central India, the districts to the East, and a great portion of the Deccan and Southern Maharatta Country. I have thus visited not only the large and small towns, but thanks to the combination of revenue and judicial functions, I have followed the camp district officers from village to village in the remotest parts of the Presidency. I have had to appear before

all classes of officers from the mahalkari and mamladar to the district magistrate and the district judge. I have practised in the courts of Native States and have pleaded before native Chiefs and judicial officers of every degree of competence. In the course of these perigrinations I have come in free, close, and spontaneous communion with all classes of clients, with the thakore and the talookdar, the tradesman and the artisan, the zamindar and the ryot, not to forget the most famous outlaw of Kathiawar of present days, don't be alarmed, gentlemen, not in the way of being looted, but in friendly converse and consultation. But it is not the extent of this communion only that is of importance, it is the nature and character of it. In Guzarat, Kathiawar, and Rajaputana at least, I was a native speaking in a common vernacular ; in the Maharatta country, I could understand, though I could not freely speak in the language of those parts. I confess my ignorance of Canarese. This alone gave me an immeasurable advantage over the best of Europeans. But what was still greater, the hearts of the people would open to me as they could never open to any, even the most sympathetic, officer, and I could enter into their real thought and feelings and interests without let or difficulty. These are my credentials and they are typical of those of hundreds of educated and intelligent natives. I think we can therefore lay claim to know a trifle more of the heart and mind of our countrymen than the ablest and most experienced of English officers. Some of them have deservedly earned a high reputation for industry and capacity in compiling statistical catalogues and encyclopædias of every variety of Indian information ; they perhaps possess a larger collection of the dry bones of Indian history. But of the living forces of Indian life and sentiment, we must

humbly take the liberty of claiming a more intuitive, intimate and superior knowledge.

Gentlemen, this brings me to the question of who are our constituents. We must at once confess that we do not represent any class or body of people on the basis of any scientific principle. We have no organised body of electors at all. Still, when Lord George Hamilton, the present Secretary of State for India, echoing our Anglo-Indian friends, insisted that a body of educated natives like the Congress, represented nobody but themselves, he failed in his grip of the true situation. Without being elected, our communion and our intercourse and our common nature with the people can qualify us to understand and to interpret their wants, wishes and sentiments, their hopes and their grievances, in a more representative manner than their foreign rulers. I quite admit that the masses of the people are not in themselves capable of formulating clear political ideas ; but feeling with them and understanding them, our education can enable us to give clear articulate expression to their confused thoughts and suggest appropriate remedies for their requirements. We are more in accord with the Princes and Chiefs of the country than is quite known or imagined. A Kathiawar Chief was once put up to say in England that Native Chiefs had no sympathy with bodies like the Congress and the ways of our educated classes. Nothing could be a more inaccurate statement. Speaking from my own knowledge, I can vouch that the majority of the Chiefs of this Presidency have close sympathy with the aims and objects of educated natives, and specifically with those of the Congress, and they have given substantial proofs of their friendly interest. It is true that they do not always give open expression to

their views for fear of displeasing their Political officers who have it in their power to harass them in a hundred different ways or to withhold from them the guns, orders and honours which they dearly love. But we can know and interpret their opinions and sentiments better than Political officers. We know that they are true and loyal, but we know how they resent the treatment that is often given them, for example, in the close and secret manner of deciding upon their claims and rights and differences in which it is now an established rule that the bare decisions contained in the resolution of the Local Government, or the Secretary of State, should be communicated, omitting all paragraphs dealing with the reasons and arguments, thus leaving them entirely to grope in the dark and generating an amount of irritation and discontent which is not suspected by the outside public.

We can equally represent the great masses of the people and we can enunciate their grievances and the measures for redressing them. We can ask for a reduction of the Salt Tax in their interest; we can ask for a lighter assessment of the land; we can ask for them for economy and reduction of expenditure, and we can point out that nothing is more responsible for squandering the revenue of the country than the military policy which has again come into favour since 1884-1885. We can point out that while one North-West scientific frontier was bad enough, that policy had added one promising to be equally troublesome, if not in time worse, on the North-East in the conquest and acquisition of Upper Burma. Lord Salisbury said the other day that his great chief, Lord Beaconsfield, had said that there is room enough for all in Asia, and added on his own part that England can hold her own under all circumstances. That may be perfectly true, but with France

added to Russia in Eastern land and sea, we have the exhilarating prospect of Asia being turned, in the same way as Europe, into a collection of armed camps. It is no doubt a proud prospect for vainglorious great Englishmen, but the country regretfully cast wistful glances on the wise policy of Lord Lawrence, whose keen sagacity had recognised that by costly efforts and enterprises to strengthen the outposts and frontiers, you may be indirectly weakening the base by impoverishing the people and undermining their contentment. In these and a hundred different ways, we are qualified by our position, our circumstances, and our education to speak for, to represent and to serve our countrymen of all grades and classes. It is a high and noble mission, imposed by duty and sanctified by patriotism. Let us hope and trust that we may be enabled to rise higher and higher to it, to guide it with unswerving loyalty, to temper it with discretion and moderation, to prosecute it with constancy and integrity, and cement it with harmony and union. Individual persons can participate in it in only a small and humble way, but your presence here shows that if we honestly and fearlessly endeavour to perform what little it may be given to each of us to do, we may be sure of the unstinted and generous support and appreciation of our countrymen of all classes, creeds and persuasions.

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